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ABSTRACT

Founded (October of 1973) to activate direct parental participation in the education of Navajo children, the Navajo Area School Board Association (NASBA) describes its goals in this document as follows: to set meaningful and reliable standards for Navajo education and to cause the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and educational contractors to meet these standards; to have direct authority and power to ensure community control over policy and standards for Navajo education; to bring together in a cooperative atmosphere all persons responsible for education; to set certification standards for education personnel; to ensure that the BIA and other government agencies are carrying out their responsibilities and functions in a manner that produces meaningful and measurable achievement in basic skills; to ensure that every person in the BIA is cooperating in these efforts; to provide effective monitoring services to the BIA and the Navajo people; to provide pertinent information to all persons concerned with Navajo education, utilizing the press, radio, printed materials and multimedia packages to be produced by NASBA. NASBA programs and plans are identified as: building an ongoing membership training program and developing relevant training materials; exploring all educational problems including personnel selection, curriculum standards, and plant management; maintaining the Summer Student Employment Program; and establishing liaison with state educational programs. (JC)

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NAVAJO AREA SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION

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[1973]

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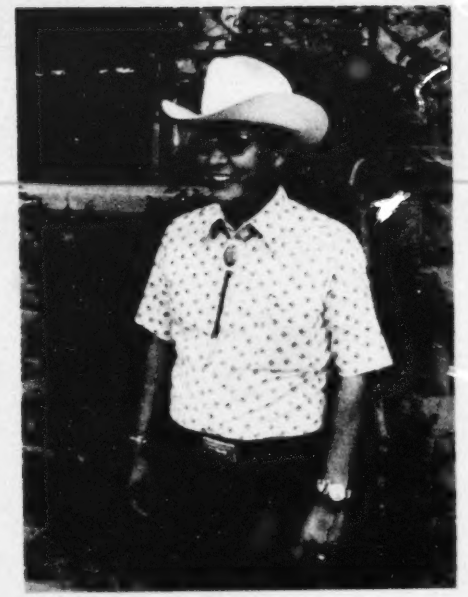
NASBA Executive Board

Mr. Edward T. Begay, President
Mr. Donald Noble, Sr., Vice-President
Mr. Roger Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer
Mrs. Annie Wauneka, Ft. Defiance District
Mr. James Notah, Ft. Defiance District
Mr. Herman Norris, Tuba City District
Mrs. Ella Yazzie, Tuba City District
Mrs. Annie Descheeney, Crownpoint District
Mr. Charlie Toledo, Crownpoint District
Mr. Taylor Dixon, Shiprock District
Mr. Harry Lee, Shiprock District
Mr. Augustine Anderson, Chinle District
Mr. George Hubbard, Chinle District



Edward T. Begay, NASBA President.

Donald Noble, Sr., Vice-President NASBA

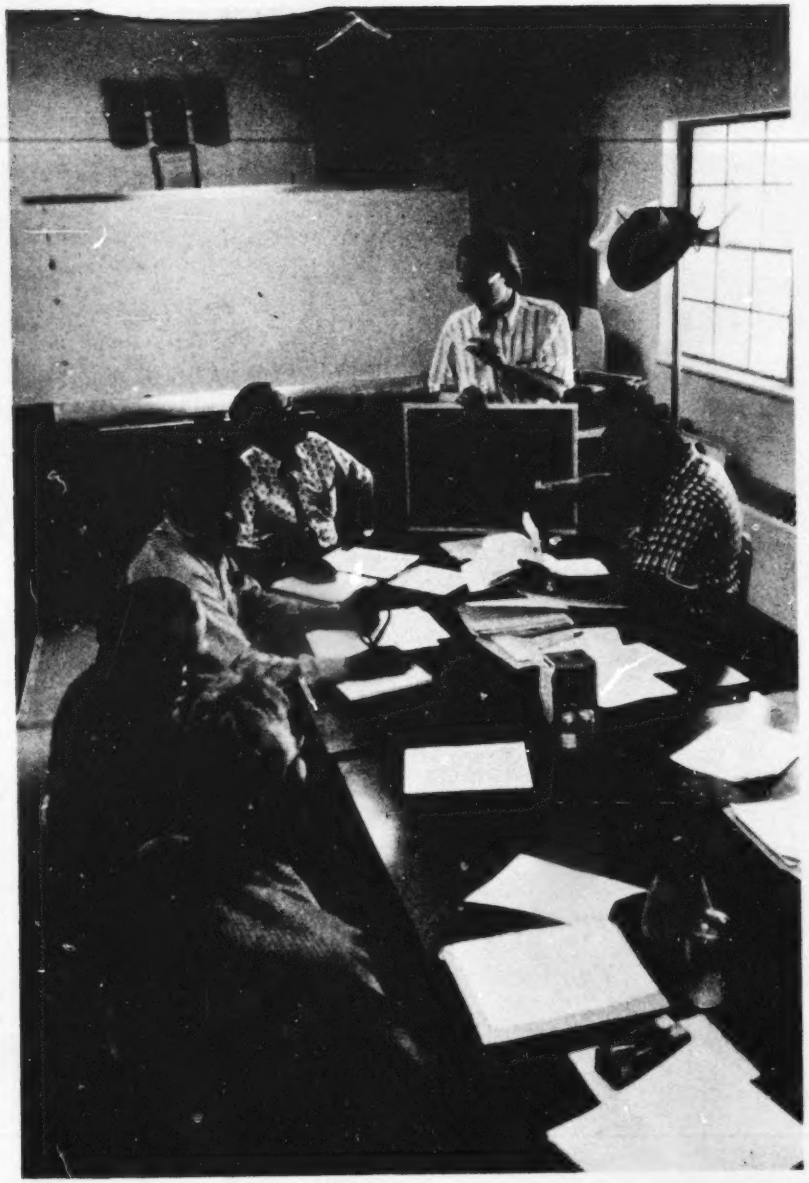
NASBA AND WHY

In October, 1973 the Navajo Area School Board Association was founded. The need had been there for a long time. The frustration of not being able to participate directly in their children's education was very real and ran deep. But only in very recent years has there been enough pressure, enough deep down desire on the part of many people, to really influence Navajo education. The ground work has now been done; that is, the preparation and organizing which could put the running of the schools into the hands of the Navajo people.

Like many other local and district members of the Navajo School Boards, Dr. Annie Wauneka, now a member of the NASBA Executive Board, Edward T. Begay, now President of NASBA, and Mr. Donald Noble, Sr., now Vice-President of NASBA, felt that their position with regard to effecting the schools, the teachers, or the programs was hollow and empty. They began to question, to ask why this or that was being done and not being done; and they began to ask who and where. They questioned the actions of the BIA. They asked about teacher credentials and background. They wanted to know about curriculum and about personnel selection. These questions were not answered, and it was soon obvious that the Navajo School Boards had no authority. They realized also that all the Navajo School Board Members were supposed to do was approve what BIA had already decided. It was then that these people decided to take action. The School Boards had been organized to rubber stamp BIA actions which had been worked out without even consulting with the Navajos. This "advisory" role for the Navajo school boards just was not enough. The long time frustrations became more apparent to the Navajo members. They became acutely conscious of these frustrations and of the educational needs of their children which were not being satisfied. They became aware that the Navajos had no real authority to change conditions. The past, the present, and indeed, the future educational circumstances for Navajos were completely in the hands of others. This could not continue. Something had to be

Dr. Annie Wauneka, Executive Board Member.

James Notah, Executive Board Member.



Committee working with their professional staff

done to get the authority necessary to effect and direct their own educational system.

These conditions set up the climate which brought about the organizing of the Navajo Area School Board Association. NASBA is dedicated to the best possible educational opportunities for Navajos. The following is the statement of the purposes and goals of the association:

Statement of Purpose and Goals

Education is the foundation of self determination. The Navajo people decided many years ago that through education they could better express the inherent and special greatness of the Navajo way of life. They also decided to determine what they needed and to determine how it would best serve the people.

The mission of NASBA is to help the Navajo community provide the best education programs for the people. To do this NASBA shall contract with governmental or private agencies to get the necessary money to plan, develop and operate innovative and straight forward educational programs. NASBA wants to develop Navajo programs that will give pride to everyone, they want to challenge and take the challenge of modern life, and they want always to bring fresh and inspiring ideas to the educational process.

Edward T. Begay, NASBA President presiding.

Mrs. Stella Lee and her Navajo Cultural Education Committee report to the Executive Board.

NASBA Goals:

1. *To set meaningful and reliable standards for Navajo education and to cause the BIA and educational contractors to meet these standards.*
2. *To have direct authority and power to ensure community control over policy and standards for Navajo education.*
3. *To bring together in a cooperative atmosphere all persons responsible for education.*
4. *To set certification standards for education personnel.*
5. *To ensure that the BIA and other government agencies are carrying out their responsibilities and functions in a manner that produces meaningful and measureable achievement in basic skills.*
6. *To ensure that every person in the BIA is cooperating in these efforts.*
7. *To provide effective monitoring services to the BIA and the Navajo people.*
8. *To provide pertinent information to all persons concerned with Navajo education, utilizing the press, radio, printed materials and multimedia packages to be produced by NASBA.*

NASBA offices in Window Rock.

Verner Duus, NASBA Director for Educational Services consults with Donald Noble, Sr.

The NASBA organization has been established. The office is in a wing of the old Window Rock Lodge building. Here the business of the organization is administered. The policy and decisions and the program direction comes from the NASBA Executive Board; the Board in turn gets its direction from the reservation wide school board membership. This democratic organization provides a way through which the people can take direct and authoritative action to the kind of education they want for their children. Through this system the people can be directly involved in setting educational standards, teacher standards, and curriculum standards. Through NASBA the Navajo people can set a course which will bring more Navajos into the educational system. The system can be organized to do what is needed for Navajos based on what Navajos decide they need. In other words, NASBA can provide the way for putting the Navajo schools into the hands of the Navajo People.

THE HISTORY OF NASBA

An active and productive organization emerges out of the needs and desires of serious people. The Navajo Area School Board Association came into existence exactly this way. Local school board and agency level members were frustrated by not being able to reach the BIA. It was impossible for them to affect in any way their own children's education. Therefore, these members called an interagency meeting to discuss the possibility of forming an organization which would provide a way for Navajos to direct their own education system.

The first reservation-wide School Board Conference met in Fort Wingate on July 18, 19, and 20, 1973. Several key people from outside, such as BIA people, State People, and other education specialists, came to talk to the conference. At this meeting the members realized that only general information could be gotten through this method. What was needed was specific and detailed information. So the conference selected an ad hoc committee whose members were to organize another conference for the purpose of forming a permanent reservation-wide school board association. This new organization would represent the Navajo people and give them a vehicle to state their hopes and desires for their children's education. It became clear that what was wanted was a democratic organization that would help put the running of the schools into the hands of the people.

The ad hoc committee members were chosen from every district and are listed as follows: George Hubbard - Chinle, Russell Todecheene - Shiprock, Martin Begay - Crownpoint, Roger Wilson - Tuba City, Donald Noble - Fort Defiance.

The committee first met at Hunters Point on July 24, 1973. Here, with the help of Mr. Edward Plummer, Crownpoint BIA Agency Superintendent and Mr. Donald Dodge, Ft. Defiance Agency Superintendent, the committee founded and named the new organization, the Navajo Area School Board Association. Other meetings were held to complete the organizational details, to set a date, and to put together an agenda for the first official meeting of NASBA.

The first Navajo Area School Board Association meeting was held October 24, 25, and 26, 1973 at Teec Nos Pos, Arizona. At this first meeting the organizational structure and the organization's name were approved. The first officers were elected, and the Executive Board was established and its members elected. NASBA was underway and ready to begin the very large task set before it.

THE PEOPLE OF NASBA

The all Navajo membership of the Navajo Area School Board Association is elected by the people in each respective community. The reservation-wide organization is a representative and democratic body made up of these members. This body of people meet and make decisions on major educational policies which affect their children. The officers and the executive board members are elected by the general membership to carry out these programs. The Executive Board directs the activities of the office and the professional staff in Window Rock. The NASBA programs are administered by this staff.

Mr. Edward T. Begay, Councilman from Churchrock, was elected the first President of NASBA. Mr. Begay got involved with NASBA through the Ft. Wingate School Board where he was President of the local board and President of the Eastern Navajo School Board Association. Mr. Donald Noble, Sr., was elected Vice-President. He is a district school board member from Ft. Defiance and a local school board member from Toyei. Mr. Roger Wilson was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Wilson is a district school board member from Tuba City.

Local School Board Member Joe Woody discusses matters of school board interest with Donald Noble.

Delbert James, NASBA Director for Administrative Services.

PROGRAMS AND PLANS

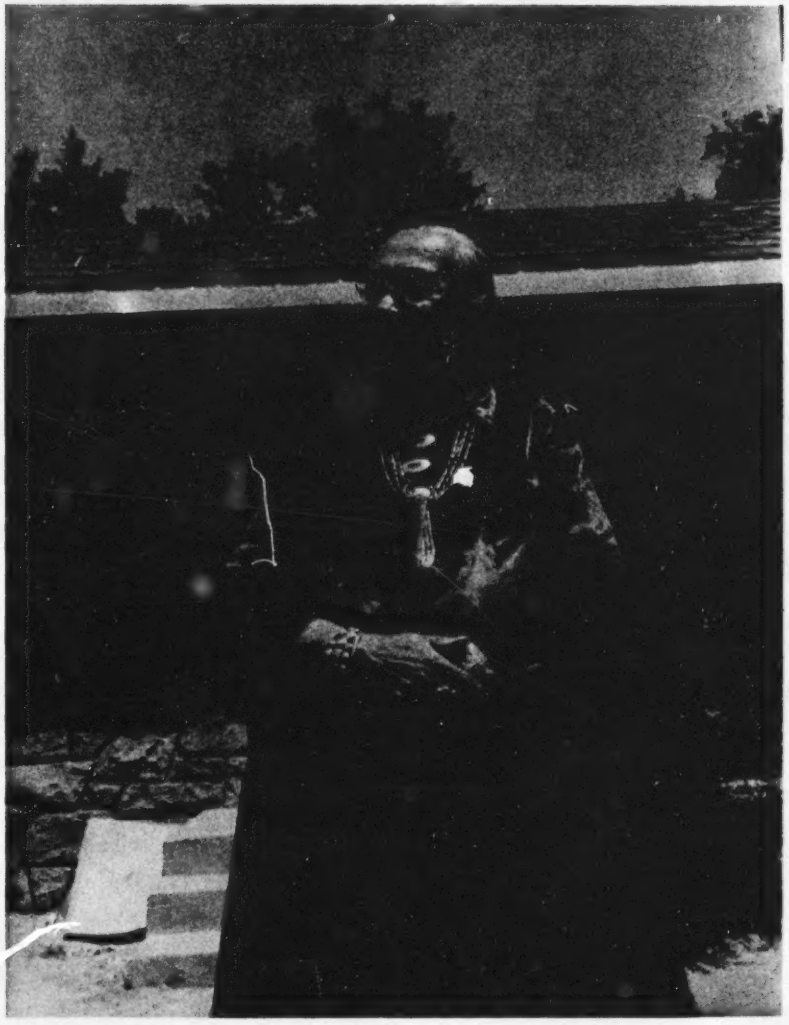
One of the first important functions of NASBA is to train its members. To do this NASBA will build an ongoing membership training program and develop relevant materials, such as media packages, in order to make the program more effective. NASBA knows that well informed Board members are central to the democratic process of the organization, and that members who are trained and informed in school matters are the best insurance for making constructive change and for stimulating the system to perform better.

Another important endeavor of NASBA is to explore all educational problems. When members point out local problems NASBA will look into the matter and support the actions of the local boards. When budgets and programs are planned, NASBA will take an active part in being sure these things are directed toward the goals of the Navajo people. NASBA intends to watch over such matters as personnel selection, curriculum standards, and plant management. Local issues or reservation-wide problems that pertain to Navajo education are within the scope of NASBA's mission.

This past summer NASBA inaugurated its annual Summer Student Employment Programs. Under these programs high school and college students are hired to help out the schools and communities with the summer work load. Through these programs Navajo young people are given a chance to earn summer money and to participate in their community and school activities. It gives them an opportunity to work, get paid for their work, and manage their own affairs.

NASBA will also keep in touch with such things as Johnson O'Malley Funds which are intended for special Indian education programs in public schools and will use this avenue to establish liaison with the state's educational programs and public board members. It will also pay close attention to the Tribal scholarship program which is to enable deserving and eligible Navajo students to go on to college and universities. Whatever affects the quality of Navajo education shall be of interest to the Navajo Area School Board Association.

The Navajo Area School Board Association is dedicated to the proposition that education is the foundation of self-determination.



Dr. Annie Wauneka, Executive Board Member.

NASBA Executive Board

School Board Members meet to discuss common interests

Photography by
Michal Heron
Written by Bob Richards